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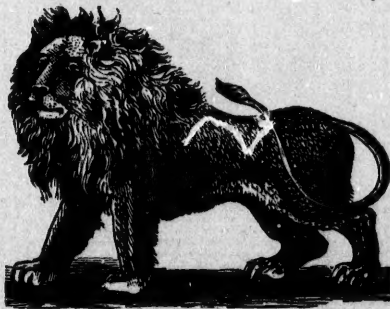
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**ROMAN DRAMA
IN FIVE ACTS**

— ENTITLED —

..Leo & Venetia..



WRITTEN BY

Wm. E. Anderson.

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1895.

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A Roman Drama
In Five Acts.



— ENTITLED —

. . . Leo and Venetia.

1st Edition.

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Cast of Characters:

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MALE.

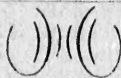
DUKE OF BENEVENTO.
RONOLO, A Roman General.
SANNIO, his accomplice.
LEO. A young Nobleman.
SERVANTUS, His Faithful Servant.
LUCILIUS, Leo's Companion.
APOTHECARY.
CONSTABLE.
EDITOR.
LEECH
VIGORES, Duke's Champion Swordsman.
NOBILIUS, Duke's Wrestler.

FEMALE.

VENETIA, Duke's Daughter.
MARGARITA, Her Cousin.
SERVIA, Venetia's Maid
MAGA SAGA and VENEFICA.

1/12/1901(?)
OCT 3 1974

LEO AND VENETIA...



Act 1.....
Scene 1.

The play is laid at Benevento, Italy.

∴

A Forest near the Town.

—: EVENTIDE. :—

The play opens in the forest. Venetia lying unconscious on the ground.

Enter Leo and Servantus in haste.

LEO. (gazing at Venetia) Dead! and ah! how beautiful. Look to her Servantus whilst I take to reckoning yon crouching brute. (unsheathing sword)

SERVANTUS. Be careful, young master Leo, put up thy trusty sword and do not imperil your life for such a random piece of sport. Come, let us bear her to some more secure retreat.

LEO. Nay, stop me not, my dear old man, look you to her Servantus. While I go for revenge. (Exit Leo)

SERVANTUS. O my sweet young master, my gentle boy, for two decades I have witnessed thy every deed, have nursed you in infancy, taught you to break your fiery steed, to stalk the fleet footed deer, to trace the lion to its lair, but now—you reject my counsel—may the gods keep you under eye, for, of late, your young hot blood begins to course too freely through your veins for my waning spirit to pursue. My life I would as willingly give to you as my services I gave to your father, my old master, and count it rich reward. Such is the power of friendship,—as a mother for the life of her babe. But I pray heaven to direct and strengthen your arm. Ah! a light breaks forth from the sky. I take it as a good omen, may Hercules sanction it, (a prolonged roar in distance) surely that was a death cry. But the lady, I most forgot her in my anxiety for my youthful keep. Let me see, I'll examine her and see if there be any violence upon her fair form. Venus or Minerva? In sooth, though conceived of Terra, Coelus has been a kind god-mother to thee. I find no sacrilege to mar so fair a world, such beauty and such raiment do but plainly show her to be of no Plebeian stock. Evidently she is of patrician birth. Ah! she moans. Nature is once more awakening into the busy stir of life. Lo! her senses awake like the dawning orb above the Meridian.

VENETIA. Where am I?

SERVANTUS. Be not afraid, fair maid, you are out of harm's reach.

VENETIA. Ah I remember! I was stricken down, seized and dragged unmercifully away over mound and hollow, stones and thicket, and its scorching breath so near to my face. Oh! until my dizzy senses whirled and sweet reprieve came to shut out the horror, oh, it was dreadful! but I cannot realize that I am still living and safe.

SERVANTUS. Yes, you are safe and better, I trust, fair one, and now I must look for my young master, I did try to restrain him, but you might as well go bid the thunder hush in sleep or try to lull the surging sea, as try to stop the fiery coursing of young Leo's veins. But you look quite ill, isn't so?

VENETIA. I think I have not suffered much material injury, I am bruised and battered somewhat but not much the worse, for wear I trow. Who is this Leo?

SERVANTUS. He is my lion-hearted boy, my sacred keep. Leo, the youngest son of Lucius Gracchus Dana, whom I have served these three score years, and may Jupiter, the God of Heaven, bear his bones safely to Elysium. When we entered the wood we did see thee lying unconscious upon the ground, and zealously guarded by yon fierce lion of the forest, but upon our approach he did cowardly abandon thee and shrink off into the thicket, thither my young master has followed him, and now I would be after him, but, I fear to leave one evil for another.

VENETIA. Oh, do not let me keep you, good sir, for since I see you so desire to be beside him in his need, let us rather pursue his tracks together, I think I am able to rise now.

(Rises and supports on Servantus.)

SERVANTUS. No need fair mistress, for, bleat be his stars, he now approaches, see 'tween yon waying branches. The Divinity have heard my prayers. But whom shall I call thee, gentle lady.

VENETIA. Venetia, I am the Duke's daughter.

SERVANTUS. Indeed! yet I am not surprised for by your raiment I betook you for some noble lady. (To Leo who enters) Welcome, Leo, how fared the lion in thy hands?

LEO. (Throws down a lion's head and broken sword) There's my story and here's the conclusion. (Tears open sleeve which reveals a horrid wound.)

VENETIA. O young man, I thank thee for thy courage, but not for the world would I have been the author of this fearful wound.

LEO. I do not regret—fair lady—'tis naught—but that which one good man should do for another, (retires to bind up wound) O foolhardiness, thou'rt easily won, why did I not heed Servantus' advice. What chance had I to baffle the lion at home. But then, all men are ambitious. Nay—Some men are conceived and born of ambition; some the world spurns to ambition, but the many die virgin to such passion. Am I of this? By the girth of Venus, no!

SERVANTUS. Come, gentle Leo, we must away and help this sweet drooping flower to some more secluded shelter.

LEO. As! be it so.

VENETIA. Good sir, heaven be doubly praised, both for yourself and I, your humble debtor, but your arm must need some speedy skill. (To Servantus.) Go hence I pray thee and have some surgeon to wait us, as for us, we will follow with dispatch. Speed good sir. (Exit Servantus)

LEO. (aside) O tumultuous heart, like a raging sea, peace be still. What is this strange feeling that burns into my soul like molten lead; That carries my every thought before it like the breaking of some large course and bears me on—on—on in its embrace. 'Tis thou I have so often seen in my day dreams. O passion! passion! thy name is love. (to Venetia) Come gentle lady, you must be nigh spent with fatigue, come lean upon me and I will lend thee succour.

VENETIA. Such rest is indeed peaceful, but alas! good sir, I think you need it more than I. (Leo reels) You are faint—shall I—aid thee? Are you better sir?

LEO. Ay! 'Twas but a fleeting pain. 'Tis naught—but ah! how sweet to find such consolation. Come!

VENETIA. Consolation (aside) Ah gentle youth you have my more than consolation. You have pierced more than you have overthrown.

LEO. Ay?

Flourish—enter Duke, guided by Servantus.

Margarita—Courtiers, etc, etc.

SERVANTUS. This way most noble Duke, here they are,

MARGARITA. O cousin, Heaven be praised, happy we are to see thee safe again. (They embrace).

DUKE. Venetia, my daughter, light of my heart and home, thou art safe.

O joyous thanksgiving. Blest be the alters of our household gods. Little did I reck to see thee again in the body. My mind was sown with strange fear and harrowed by little hope. Blest be our household gods!

VENETIA. Yes, father, my liege, I had indeed given myself up for lost, but upon awakening I found not the lion crouching beside me, with its cold glittering, steely eyes, but the happy features of this kind old man, and yonder hero followed the lion to its lair, exposing his life for my sake, and see, father this horrid wound. Was it not brave?

DUKE. Brave? Of course it was. Youth, to whom do I owe such great beneficence?

LEO. My name is Leo; the youngest son of Lucius Gracchus Dana, my lord.

DUKE. I do ~~not~~ remember your father honorably. Boy from the inmost recesses of my heart I appreciate and laud your daring, and in recognition thereof, for anything within the bonds of reason, I am your debtor. Ask what thou wilt.

LEO. (Aside). Ah! What a strange spell comes over me. Ask what thou wilt. (pause). Have I lost all my courage? Why, am I dumb? My heart is full of envy for that which I have not, but my tongue is cleft, so that I am without the power of speech. Come! come! courage Leo! I saw the fires of divine love gleaming in her eyes. Ask for his daughter's hand, you have her heart. Ah—

VENETIA. (Advancing). Good Sir. My father addressed you. Heard you not?

LEO. Ah yes! He bids me ask a favor. There is but one wish for me. One wish to fill my happy conscience. But I would not frame the thought in words lest I should cause thee displeasure. Do you make some gentle request for me and I'll be gratified.

VENETIA. Nay! nay! good gentleman. Ask as thy heart desires. I see it in thine eyes, yea—as thy heart desires.

(Leo advances to Duke).

VENETIA. Now Venus be our stead!

LEO. Most Noble Duke, directed by the impulse of my heart, I have but one thought to fill my quiver of desires. And yet it is much—I could not ask thee more—thou couldst not give me more. Hitherto, my lord, my life has been one long untrammelled recess—free from all the restraints of the world I gave myself up to such sports and amusements as my happy mind and liberty directed. but now, my lord, a new desire has crept within my heart to mar its quiescence there. A desire that makes me no longer my former self—no longer a slave to mine own fancies and happy conscience, but bound down in the thralls of a happy (?) love. (Kneels). I ask thee for thy daughter's hand.

DUKE. Courageous youth. I'll not deny thee, press thy suit and glory and fame falling upon thy head, thou shalt wear her upon thy breast. In the interim to a lieutenantancy in my legions do I commission thee and when thou art older, maturer and do know more of the world, then shalt thou and my daughter be one.

LEO. My liege, I understand. Like my nature my words have flown too fast, but having won renown in thy services, then shall I ask thee again, more advisedly, for you bright jewel that has already set itself within my heart like the ruddy orb that stands above our heads in the celestial skies.

DUKE. 'Tis well said. Thou hast the necessary mettle. I'll hope thee speedy ascension, which I see by sundry looks my daughter 'll not regret.

LEO. Thanks, my lord, my tongue has lost the words to convey the abundant gratitude of my heart. But sir, I pray thee leave to retire from here for my hurts are weighing sorely on my mind.

DUKE. Be of good cheer, lad, battle for the right, all things come to him

who strives with patience and rectitude of mind.

LEO. Anon, my Lord, you shall see me mount step by step till I have reached the zenith of my highest aspirations. Give me but a stand upon the water's edge and I'll force my way across thro' the bitterest waves of adversity that dare assail against me. Come good Servantus, and fare thee well my lord.

DUKE. I trust so—fare you well. Now daughter and you cousin let's be off for the blood red moon has already supplanted the sun. (going)

VENETIA. Why Marg'y, he never said as much as farewell to me. I wonder—

MARG'Y. O I pray thee sweet coz, don't be too exacting a lover. In the bonds of pain, misery drives out thoughts of love. Come let's go.

RONOLO. (Advancing). Fair lady, allow me? Let me be thine escort.—*exeunt omnes*—

Re-enter Leo—gazes after them.

LEO. At least I might have said farewell. Ah! she turns—adieu—

Waves his cap.

—: CURTAIN. :—

ACT I—SCENE II.

Place—Leo's home. Enter Leo supporting on Servantus.

SERVANTUS. Come, bear up, gentle Leo! Courage yet! This strain has been too much for thee. (Leo reels). What courage! courage! My boy, bear up patiently, there Leo, rest here, ah that's well. Now let me bathe thy hurts, let me apply balm to thy wounds. O, my sweet young master, my noble hearted boy, give life its spirit that was wont to sit so majestically upon thy fair brow. Gladly would I bear it for thee. Ay! even to death itself—joyfully, joyfully, Leo, for thy sake.

LEO. Kind old man, I know it, but I would not have it otherwise, I thank thee even so. But say, good Servantus, shall I ever have full power of this poor member, think you? Three days have brought me naught but increased suffering and pain is now my emblem. But fie! it's childish in me to speak thus, I'll be round in time to stand for the annual Olympian Games, I'll wager. I would not miss them for thrice the pain. Come good Servantus, get me some fresh balm. Let us assist nature in so much as we can.

SERVANTUS. Yea, Leo; I think it well. Keep up a strong heart and I'll return in the thrice of an eye. Exit Serv.

LEO. Well, I must no longer be a youth. Farewell, sweet happy days! Farewell, sweet innocent self! Now comes the harder duty for love and country. But I am tired of this, come good trusty steel I'll try thy temper and thou'lt try mine. (Heats his sword red hot) Come thy temper's up; thou'rt hot for it, have at thee. (Burns the wound then sinks upon a couch).

(Enter Venetia and Margarita.)

VENETIA. What's this? Leo! O cousin come gaze upon this. See what picture the gods have painted, so natural but pale. Why, 'tis enough to make a row in heaven. A second golden apple thrown into the assemblage of the Divinities. But how deathlike he reposes. (sinks suddenly upon her knees.) He cannot be dead, cousin?

MARGARITA. No! no! he but sleeps. Do you but rap upon the portals of his dream gates, and you'll find life there, ay, plenty of it, sweetheart. But, I pray thee Venetia to excuse me. I must look out for Lucilius, he promised to overtake us on the way, but I just know, the wretch has forgotten his promise. It's just like him for men and their promise are very similar, they apout up with the rain and droop wiltingly when the sun is upon them. Indeed, they are just like so many weather-cocks when the winds are asleep, and the weather fair, they are gloriously constant, but every breath of wind influences them,

and they flee like arrows from the bow of Adversity. Ah well, such is man, but I'll teach him a lesson when I've found him, never fear. Anon dearie. (Exit)

VENETIA. Little witch! but, I wonder if he dreams—of me? Sweet youth, how I should like to have been a goddess and hurled ten thousand thunderbolts into the death-bed of the lion, ere his cruel fangs had so crushed thy poor flesh. Ah me! 'twould have been such satisfaction. Then I might have carried him off to Olympus, defied him, and together we would have roamed on an everlasting bridal tour, in the Golden Chariot of the sun. But, dreaming aside, I wonder if he really loves me.

LEO. (as in a dream) Yes.

VENETIA. O Leo! how you startled me! I ought to be more careful—but how fortunate, he only dreams. But then he has unconsciously answered my prayer, my heart's desire. O Hymen, speed the time till we be blest with one marriage bond. Here's a token of my love, and never, never do you part with this till your love has ceased to be. (Places a chain about his neck, and is stealthily about to kiss him, when he encircles her neck with his arm) O Leo! for shame, why did you awake?

LEO. For shame, my darling? No! no! for love; but if for shame on my part, for what on thine? Now I have thee. Ha! ha! ha.

VENETIA. Peace Leo, forgive me, I thought you were asleep and would never be the wiser. But I don't believe you were, and I'm sore displeased at you too!

LEO. Never mind Venetia, candidly. I was longing myself to know if my passion was reciprocal. Blessed be our fate, and now, happy I am that I live in certainty of thy love. I return thine with all my soul.

VENETIA. O keep it Leo! I would not have them both. I begin to find the one almost uncontrollable. But, dear Leo, my father bade me see if you were improving, and I have already delayed too long.

LEO. Better, sweetest love, now that I am a man of more design and more love having felt thy sweet influence. Here I dedicate my indomitable energy to the influence of our mutual welfare. (Enter Ronolo. Shakes his hand significantly at duet)

RONOLO. (advancing) Venetia, your father awaits your presence.

VENETIA. Fare thee well, Leo.

LEO. Farewell.

(Exit Venetia and Ronolo.)

—: CURTAIN. :—

ACT II.—SCENE 1.

Venetia's apartments. Venetia and Margarita present.

VENETIA. How do you like my last design, dear Marg'y? Is it not attractive?

MARGARITA. Attractive? Yes, but monotonous. Let me see. A baby cupid propping up an Herculean shield bearing your legend "Awake not the lion, he sleepeth." In the centre a wreath, and within the wreath L.G.D., skillfully interwoven. A broken sword and a lions head lie upon the ground. Truly historical, exquisitely designed and extremely well executed. But how often you repeat some part of it, and then it becomes like an interlineal translation of some old Sanscrit Romance, you read between the lines, and it unfolds a tale of love. But don't mind me, Ven'y, I'm only playing the matron. Blushes become you all the same. (Enter Servia).

SERVIA. Peace to you, dear mistress, Ronolo desires your audience.

VENETIA. O fie on him? What say you, cousin, 'tis well we love not all who fawn upon us, else we were held too cheap, yet I suppose like Jacsó with

a thorn in his flesh, we must grin and abide it, so bid him enter good Servia.
(Exit. Servia.)

VENETIA. Now, I just need another thread and all will be complete.

MARGARITA. I'll get it for thee, Venetia. (Exit. Margarita.)

VENETIA. I wonder what he wishes. Of late he becomes very despicable in my eyes. Methinks he has some specific motive and if it be as I fear, I shall grind his hopes into mutilation, for ever beyond recognition.

(Enter Ronolo.)

RONOLO. Fair day, sweet lady, how dost thy father to day, and thou.—I hope thou art enjoying the good benefit of health, but no need to ask, for I see upon thy cheeks the bloom of summer roses, watered by a happy and contented mind.

VENETIA. Yes, I thank thee, both my father's health and mine is all that could be desired. (Gazing upon her work.)

RONOLO. What has thou there, sweet lady?

VENETIA. (Hastily folding up her work). 'Tis naught. I was but dreaming of—

RONOLO. Be thine imagining the dreams of fortune, fame or love?

VENETIA. Oh fortune, strange good fortune, that saved me from the very mouth of the cruel monster death, e'en as her teeth were fast closing upon me; and fame, so eagerly sought for by some, that falls like night upon the heads of others, and that never knew the many; and love, ah! well for no lion.

RONOLO. Prithee, 'tis well said, Venetia, but you seem to dwell quite lengthily upon your recent adventure. Who is this boy that—a—killed the beast?

VENETIA. He wears the name of Leo, possibly suggested by fate, and it fits him nobly, say they who know him best.

RONOLO. Ah, likely. Rome has many such youths, but I believe his character is not above reproach, that is, I have it only from heresay. But anon, I come to speak to you of another matter, charming mistress—of love, the magic of life! Of love, deeper than friendship, and little less than reverence. Love between a friend and the gods. By the heights of the Himalayas and the depths of the Persian Gulf. I love thee! I adore thee! With such a passion that rends my whole being, that makes me no longer my former self, but God or Demon as thou wilt.

VENETIA. Sir, you ought to swear the more orthodox "By my sword, fair lady. I live and die for thee." But no! the man who woos me successfully, must be young, gallant, brave and handsome. All these you may have, but yet—you lack one little sesame, which alone can admit you to the caverns of my affection.

RONOLO. And pray, what is that, my pretty one?

VENETIA. It is that, which with it is everything and with out it nothing. My love, which is given to another and counselled by my father in thy hearing; and now pray tell me why, knowing that, you come to me in quest of that which I have not. Do you accuse me of inconstancy to my friend or disloyalty to my father?

RONOLO. Nay, I would accuse you of nothing. Your mind's eye still rests upon the youth of whom we spoke. By my manhood, he is but a boy—not worthy of such love as thine, nor of the affections of a man. When can he give thee? On the other hand, look to the riches, social position, honor, everything that the mind can conceive, is before thee, within thine easy grasp. (whispering) If it please thee I will add Emperor to my category, and who would not be an Empress? On the other hand, this youth—why he is but a boy, and his name is surrounded by some dark blot which will disfigure him for life.

VENETIA. 'Tis false! One has but to look once upon his brow to see the

marks of honor and reverence stamped upon his countenance. Show me the unblemished man, for I've never seen him yet, and I'll show you a God Divine, (aside) of course, I exempt Leo for he is a spirit of love personified.

RONOLO. Be that as it may, fair lady, do not reject my suit. Exchange that cloud which obliterates the sun's sweet radiance for one fleeting glance of love and I'll be satisfied. Think of all that this means to you and what it means to me. By the heavens above, this love is no boy play. 'Tis as irrevocable as the doom of judgment. Come give me some return for that which you have robbed me of.

VENETIA. Sir! I am not insensible to the honor you offer me; by birth you are my equal, and you have many good qualities in your ambition, but let me tell you once and for all, I cannot. The Decrees have otherwise ordained it. My father has counselled another and my heart goes with it. Therefore, it cannot be.

RONOLO. O heavy day! But, by Hades! you will never marry such a knave as knave as he! What will he ever be able to offer thee.

VENETIA. At least his love, which is worth more than some people's millions.

RONOLO. (Aside) Well boy beware the north wind for it shall bear black tempest and death to thy dreams. But come, my lovely one, you will think better of this anon.

VENETIA. No, never! Try not to change the stars from their course, for their plan is fixed inevitably and so is mine. (going)

RONOLO. Mark you—I shall not suffer defeat in this. You will yet rejoice to come and recline upon these arms you now so ungraciously refuse—you will.

VENETIA. Laughs scornfully. (exit)

RONOLO. Ha! She scorns my suits, she little thinks that Ronolo has within his busy brain the means to change thy puny mind like a reed before the gale. Pshaw! Others have changed before, even courted change, and so will she. Let me see, I do remind me of an apothecary, a poor half-fledged fellow, raw-boned, sunken cheeked, languishing for better fare. Thither shall I go and buy me some poison. My scheme—ah, now I have it—thus. The Duke, her father, dead. Died of some peculiar disease. The doctors all dissemble, ah well, no matter. This young leopard thrown to the lions; Ronolo in power and Venetia—ah! Here's the music! Venetia, the loving tender wife of Ronolo—ha! ha! ha! Very good, the scheme begins to mature within my mind. Pshaw! any man may play the villain if the stakes are but high enough. And yet for the little feeling I have within me for the Duke, I would give him more pity. Let me see. Yes, here's another side to the same argument. If I can successfully implicate this young plague with the Duke's health that would pave the way to the same conclusion. Well we'll see. Time works manifold changes even in women's hearts.

—: CURTAIN. —:

ACT II.—SCENE 2.

Apothecary shop. Apothecary distilling certain liquids.

APOTH. Tincture Cinchona Co.,
Six ingredients together go,
Serpentary bark peel
Saffron spirit and Cochineal
All into the kettle
And there let it settle
Till seven nightly moons have past
Then taken no human ills can last.
(Makes a pass)

There that's sufficient good Elixir to men's stomachs. It's the old law, violate nature and you pay her penalty. On other's excesses, we enrich our pockets, and for that reason the world esteems us not its friend. Ah, some one enters.

Enter Ronolo and Sannio.

RONOLO. Fair day, Apothecary, I have a dog which has taken grievously ill of a distemper, and being my favorite hunter, I am loth to let it die peacefully. Thinkest thou thy wit could cure it?

APOTH. No, not my wit my lord, but possibly my knowledge of the materia medica might lend you assistance.

RONOLO. Well, good sir, pray give me some good certain cure that will course thro' its veins and counteract the foul ravages of disease. I care not what it is, so long as it be speedy and sure.

APOTH. Ah, yes—let me see. Do you put this powder in some water, steep it and give it him. In the course of a few hours he will have complete semblance of death. Then give him this other powder and he shall speedily revive, being entire well.

RONOLO. Very good. Here is five ducats.

(Apoth. puts money in bag on shelf.)

SANNIO. (aside) I'll take the change later on.

RONOLO. Sir, thou'rt deeply skilled. I have heard in the secret preparations of the most deadly drugs such as might bring sweet death to weary souls. Is it so or are thy powers over rated.

SANNIO. Now, he comes to business.

APOTH. Yes, good sir, I do indeed know many such drugs, but the badge of our profession is "Cura atque Industria." It is one of healing and honest labor. Moreover Benevento's laws is death to anyone violating her laws of society. So you see we neither sell these nor give them outside our supervision.

RONOLO. Oh! Quite right, quite right, my worthy fellow. But I merely ask for edification. Oft have I had the curiosity to wonder which death would be the most preferable. Now, suppose you were under sentence of death for some crime,—say—any capital offence, what means of death would you most likely court?

APOTH. Oft have I thought of this. 'Tis a threadworn garment to me. My favorite death would be from the Persian Poppy Plant. The capsules having been wounded a juicy exudation bleeds forth, which, treated by certain secret chemio means yields a snowy white substance which taken into the vitals produces a beautiful and lasting dream, from which there is no awakening. Unconsciously one drifts into Eternity as a river glides placidly into the ocean's breast, or like the sleepy moon drifting on till it be lost behind a cloud, then out of sight. Here is a liquid which is preferred by one of my learned associates of medicine. One drop of which directly it touches the blood produces one horrid apasm like the snapping of a twig. Then all is silent in death. Just a terrific thunder bolt, then silence again for ever reigns supreme.

RONOLO. Wonderful! Wonderful! But are there none more lingering in their course, none that merely makes the one who quaffs it unfitted for the duties of life, blinding reason, dulling intellect, or sending the ravings of a mad man through his frame, or some long lingering illness which bedrides the patient with a long and fatal sinking. Methinks I heard of such and yet I can hardly believe it. Be they true?

APOTH. Ay, to be sure, there are many strange symptoms derived from moon gathered herbs. This grimy looking potion doth produce the very semblance of life and death—consumption—that vilest of most vile of loathful disease. It creeps insidiously on like the huge serpent from the tomb of Anubias, licking up the libations of health until finally having exhausted them quite, he departs leaving death in his wake.

RONOLO. Wonderful! wonderful! I can scarce believe it. O wonderful mind! How mighty is the fruits of thy conceptions. But is there no drug to counteract its terrible propensities.

APOTH. As there is no life without death, so is there no drugs which have not their counterpart. If you wish to see its antagonist I have it growing in my garden. Will you step with me?

(Exeunt Ronolo and Apothecary.)

SANNIO. Now my soul moves within me to do some good. It is said by mighty philosophers of old, that every man has within his easy reach at least one opportunity of good. I have had many and still another mirrors its countenance before me. Now is the accepted time and this (seizes the money bag of Apoth.) the accepted opportunity. Good God! What a wonderful waste of nature is arrayed within these walls. I like living beauty better than dead nature. But enough of this, let's see what he's got here; powdered oculis from freshly died babes, lizard's tongues, and scorpious scales, leopard's bane, deadly night-shade, etc., etc., too numerous to be mentioned. One man's medicine another man's poison. (begins grinding in a mortar when an explosion occurs, and knocks him over.) Help! help! good Apothecary help!

Re-enter Apoth. and Ronolo.

APOTH. Well man, what to pay now?

SANNIO. Oh my head, your infernal machine flashed lightnings. See my head. It seems to be broken. Feel it sir.

APOTH. Rest easy, but after this, be not so meddlesome, your face is burned, but there is no further injury. Here let me bathe it with this.

RONOLO. (Stealing the vial that produces the symptoms of consumption.) Come, good Elixir, with thee victory and I go hand in hand. (Secretes it in his person.)

—: CURTAIN :—

ACT III.—SCENE 1.

Duke's Palace. The duke in bed. Venetia and Margarita at the bedside. Ronolo and Servia at the table. Servia pours out potion; Ronolo drugs it and motions Servia in command to give it to the duke. Duke drinks the poisoned draught.

DUKE. Venetia, my darling, I am dying. There is no use withholding the truth from you, if you have not already guessed it. I am dying, dying Venetia, dying. Oh, it is so hard to leave thee, whose sweet smiles and loving care was Elysium to me. Oh, it is hard!

VENETIA. Father, dear father, think not of me. O, how I wish I could follow thee, or that thou hadst not to leave this dear mother earth. (enters the leech.) O doctor, do you not think there is yet some hope?

LEECH. (After making an examination.) I should advise absolute rest, above all. While there's life there's hope.

DUKE. Be silent man. Rest? How can I rest when you see my life ebbing slowly from my grasp? What licentiousness have I ever indulged in that I should be thus visited by such dread disease? Were not my ancestors men of state; true men and brave; first in battle, fame and love. They have not left me this portion. How can I rest knowing this? Why should I be thus visited by such dread disease. Oh I stifle—ah, that's better. Thy close insidious words are treachery, there is no hope. You know it.

LEECH. My lord, we fight death to the last extremity. But I fear there is no hope, but hope in Elysium.

DUKE. Give place all, and call Ronolo to my side.

Exeunt. Enter Ronolo.

RONOLO. My lord, I wait upon your grace.

DUKE. Ronolo, is that you? Why, how you tremble, Man, what's the matter?

RONOLO. Naught, most noble duke, but my agony for thy suffering.

DUKE. Ronolo, Venetia, into thy hands I commit her care. I am dying, Ronolo, fast departure, my latest breath is nigh. I am about emerging from the sweet sunny smiles of earth departing thro' the clouds of despair into the radiant and glossy light beyond the Styx. We have been close friends, Ronolo, wilt thou be to her as a brother for my sake?

RONOLO. I will.

DUKE. O Ronolo, I thank thee for thy love, that eases me, now I can die peacefully. But oh! if you but knew what she has been to me, since her mother's death, my pretty baby girl, prating and cooing in her father's arms. My loving frolicking girl always running to me with her petty confidences. My tender woman, always thinking of her father first, then, Ronolo, you would know the benefits of marriage. O my child, my child, the parting is indeed hard.

RONOLO. My lord, there may be yet hope for thee.

DUKE. Alas! That time is past.

RONOLO. My lord, I was even about to enter to appraise you of certain suspicions, when you requested my presence here.

DUKE. Suspicions! Of what?

Enter Venetia behind the tapestry unseen.

RONOLO. Dost thou think that thou art dying of disease?

DUKE. Ay, Ronald, what else?

RONOLO. Did poison ever enter your mind?

DUKE. Poison? No, why should I think that? To whom should I credit such a deed? No, Ronolo, not poison.

RONOLO. Well, most noble Duke, think again. Was there not of late one who saved your daughter's life?

DUKE. Ay! But what of that?

RONOLO. Popular suspicion is directed against him. He loves thy daughter and would marry her. You are the only barrier to his wishes. Think you that wish would not spurn him to such a deed?

DUKE. No!

RONOLO. If it were sworn that he is clandestine with one of thy servants, who prepares thy food. Would that?

DUKE. No, Ronolo, I could not think him so evil. Who has put such evil thoughts into thy head? To be sure, I can see no just reason for my illness but no—I don't see that that could follow. If it be as you say, that he is familiar with his tasters, I am sorry for him. But I am sure he is innocent of such a deed.

RONOLO. But I'm sure he's not!

DUKE. Not so fierce, Ronolo. Why, what's the matter, you change color like a woman. Have you any more suspicions?

RONOLO. Yes, enough to convict Pluto himself. You see this phial. I have had it analyzed. It produces just such symptoms as you have now. This was found in the maid's possession, since I have possessed myself of it. I have heard the maid has fled. Well, what thinkest thou now?

DUKE. I do not know.

RONOLO. This letter she secretly sent to her lover, but enough to say it miscarried. Shall I read it?

DUKE. If you wish.

RONOLO. It is directed to this same Leo.

DUKE. Read on.

RONOLO. My own love Leo. Great danger is above our heads. Thy vial has been either stolen while I slept, or bewitched away. The duke is slowly

sinking past all human help, I must fly for the danger is great. If it be as I fear, our lives are not safe. We must fly; meet me at the trysting place where I first knew thy kiss. Servia. Well, Duke, what is thy mind now?

DUKE. If this be true, O confidence sadly misplaced! How often is vice bedecked with most glittering charms of falsehood unperceived! Go seek him and if this be true, heaven forgive him, for I never will. Go!

RONOLO. Farewell, my lord.

—: CURTAIN. :—

ACT III—SCENE 2.

Place—Leo's garden in front of his house. Leo carving on a tree. Enter

Venetia hurriedly.

VENETIA. O Leo fly! Fly for thy life! Be quick. O my darling Leo, haste thee away from here.

LEO. Fly? Where wouldst thou have me fly? Art thou tired of me already? Or didst thou mean me to fly to thy dear arms?

VENETIA. Nay, not now. O, I do not know whether to believe it or not, but you must haste away from here, you have no moment to spare.

LEO. Believe what and why?

VENETIA. Leo, forgive me, but I cannot believe you false. Learn that Ronolo who has secret cause to hate thee has sworn to my father that thou wert the agent of his illness; that your fair hand was dyed with the sinister plot to poison him. No, believe me Leo, I believe you as innocent as my love. But stay not here an instant!

LEO. No, I shall await development. I can at least die striving to rid the world of one dark blot. Moreover, my honor and sword are one. He'll have to rob me of this to gain the other.

VENETIA. Leo! You love me?

LEO. Better than death. Yea, better than life. Can you doubt that?

VENETIA. Then for my love's sake. Leo, flee, and if thy name is not proven guiltless, my love shall stay with thee throughout all eternity; nay, Leo, if it is not proven guiltless then I will follow thee to the four corners of the earth. Speed away quickly, for they are fast upon us now!

LEO. If thou wert to command my life, I would proudly lay it at thy feet; as thou command me to do this, so let it be.

VENETIA. O heaven protect thee, my heart's treasure! and grant thee speedy deliverance. I will not rest, I promise thee, till I have given thy fair name spotless to the world.

LEO. Thanks. Thou art my love!

VENETIA. O Leo fly for thy life! Listen! They come—be off.

LEO. Farewell, Venetia. (Exit Leo.)

Enter Ronolo and Sannio.

RONOLO. Well, Venetia, what dost thou hear? Knowest thou not that it is very bad grace to be seen haunting about the spirit of your father's assassin.

VENETIA. As I do not desire his presence then, I will retire. (Exit.)

RONOLO. What in the name of the gods does the girl mean. By Jupiter!

SANNIO. She means that you're a spirit and a bad one too. Ha ha!

RONOLO. Here, you babbling baboon, go call the house up, and see if he is here. We'll trach him like thirsty bloodhounds till we see him weltering in his own life blood.

—: CURTAIN. :—

ACT III—SCENE 8.

Night—Mountain retreat of witches. Thunder and lightning. Three witches approach from different directions and hobbly around chanting.

VENEFICA. Why meet we together?

BOTH. By the circle, the diamond, the ash and the herb. By the blood red seal of Pluto and Proserpine. The elements do call us from our lair.

MAGA. Hail sisters three,
Our own divinity
Salve, salvete, salve!

SAGA. 'S the lightning's glare
That drives us from our liar.
Salve, salvete, salve!

VENEFICA. 'S the thunder's roar
That makes our spirits soar.
Salve, salvete, salve!

MAGA. Lici!

SAGA. Hush!

VENEFICA. Hark!

ALL. Someone approaches.

MAGA. My bones do ache—'Tis an enemy.

SAGA. My nail has split—'Tis an nobleman.

VENEFICA. Go, vanish all,
I will recall
Later on.

Enter Ronolo and Sannio.

RONOLO. What a fearful night. I feel a presentment that something is going to happen. Keep your sword out good Sannio, we might be murdered here. What's that?

SANNIO. 'Twould be better to tie up your conscience in a winding sheet than take offence at an owl. Say, master, I must have more money. I'm out of funds, d'ye see?

RONOLO. You glutton, do you feed on gold?

SANNIO. No more than you feed upon your little intrigues with the Duke's life for instance.

RONOLO. Know you whom you address, sir?

SANNIO. Yes, well! but remember the most powerful have their weak spots, you have yours; pay me like a man and I'll lead you to the bloody deed. He sleeps yonder upon the mountain side.

RONOLO. Well, here's your accursed gold.

SANNIO. Would I had much more such cursed stuff. It's what keeps the world movin', aint it?

RONOLO. Come, let's to the deed, lead the way!

SANNIO. Follow me, and you'll see the reeking red blood flow. (Exit both)

Re-enter witches.

MAGA. Was ever villainy more deeply dyed?

SAGA. Did ever rogues more discordantly gab together.

VENEFICA. Will we let this pursue.

BOTH. No! No!

VENEFICA. Then one must die to save him, hear ye that?

BOTH. All, all, if it needs be!

VENEFICA. Then shall we draw lots to see who shall join our benighted sisterhood in the Aetherial regions. Know ye that one of us, according to fate, must annually sacrifice to the course of events, and what better than by saving the life of another.

BOTH. Ay! ay! 'Tis well said. We were human once ourselves.
They draw lots.

MAGA. Ra ! Ra ! Hora ! I have it children, victory and death ! Triumphantly I go to join my sisterhood and only ye remain. Listen, children, till ye come to join us. I will visit ye in the lightning's glare, talk with ye in your dreams, play with ye in the sunbeams, laugh in the thunder's roar, whistle thro' the winds, mingle my tears with the rain drops, sing with ye in the rustling of the leaves, gabble with ye in the running brooks. Ye shall see us, sisters, in the clouds. We will meet with ye, talk with ye, laugh with ye, and sigh with ye, till ye join us in our everlasting glorification.

BOTH. So be it Maga. We go sleep in sorrow till we meet thee.

MAGA. (Disconsolately) Compassion rends me, children, I suffer for you, albeit I am so near my sister spirits, but from my great sympathy, children, I will give you ocular powers to be present with us in the spirit till your bond be due.

BOTH. We bless thee Maga. No ! No ! We can not bless but we will not curse.
(They hobble away chanting.)

ALL. Let us away, a life to save.

We're not so black a heart to lack.

Vale, bene, valeas ! Vale. bene, valeas.

—: CURTAIN :—

ACT IV—SCENE 1.

Mountainous district—Leo and Servantus asleep on an elevation. Tableau.

A vision of Venetia appeared to Leo in his dreams. Ronolo appears also in vision and stabs her; from her dead remains rises up a spectre who loads Ronolo with curses.

LEO. Am I awake ? Do I but dream ? Oh, ye God to whom is all the power of the sea, the earth and the sky. Ye moulder of order from chaos, bend thine infinity to one of thy master creations, and list to thy humble suppliant's prayer. Into thy hands do I commit her life ! Guard it most reverently for my sake. O, I thank ye Gods that I but dream. Di boni ! Proh Deum atque Hominum, grant us better things. I thank thee, 'tis but a dream.

(Sleeps again)

SERVANTUS. (Wakens up and throws a coat over his his shoulders) Poor boy !

(Sleeps)

Enter Ronolo and Sannio.

SANNIO. This way, master, stealthily, quietly, here he lies.

RONOLO. Are you sure 'tis he ? Yes, by the God Jupiter. Come forth thou naked weapon from thy midnight bed. Thou'rt wanted.

SANNIO. Better let me do the deed. It's possible a little out of your line, aint it ?

RONOLO. No, I'am for it, 'tis the more satisfaction, and if it came to aught, my word's as good as thine. Is't not ?

SANNIO. Strike then !

RONOLO. (Attempts to stab Leo but fails.) Ye gods, Sannio, some strange power withheld my hand so that I could not have smote a child.

SANNIO. Yes ! Some strange power very good, I'll believe that. Give me your steel ! (Advances, is about to strike but cannot.)

RONOLO. Strike ! Strike man for your life and run !

SANNIO. (Retreating) I don't mind the running. It's no use. I felt as if all the eyes of the devils in hell were upon me.

RONOLO. What man ? Thou'rt but milk sop.

SANNIO. What, would'st thou insult me ? Then draw and have at thee, villain.
(Strikes Ronolo.)

RONOLO. Hold ! Hold ! Good Sannio. Thou hast my weapon. I meant naught, I was merely taunting thee as thou did'st me. Give me the weapon and a moments grace and something must fall. (Advances and stabs at Leo,

the blow is received in the breast of the witch who intercepts her body to save Leo. The three witches rise amid a bright lurid light and pour forth curses on Ronolo.)

MAGA. Cursed be thy name. May thy sulphurous soul be lost eternally upon the banks of the Stygian gloom!

SAGA. Doubly cursed be thy memory. May the ravenous beak of vulturesome remorse pray upon thy Promethean conscience for ever and a day!

VENEFICA. Trebly cursed be thy self. May every look of thy head, Antigone-like, be changed into a mass of wriggling, seething serpents of vengeance pluck out thine eyes, and nest within thy marrowless skull!

ALLTOGETHER WITH LEO AND SERVANTUS. Fie wretches; Fie! (Tableau)

—: CURTAIN :—

ACT IV—SCENE 2.

Palace of the Duke.

VENETIA. O how lonely I am to-day! I had such a weird and horrid dream last night. And yet 'twere such food for an artist's brush. It was so grand.

MARG. Come cousin, tell us the dream.

VENETIA. 'Twas as if I saw Leo asleep upon a mountain's eminence, as fair and innocent as a new born babe sleeping so securely on his mother's breast. When up sprang a vision of Ronolo like a mist from hell, who raised on high a glittering murdersome steel which, descending, pierced—not Leo's heart, but some awful demoniacal creature, some hag who raised like a startled Phoenix from the fires of Leo's dreams, but only to fall wreathing in the agencies of death. O it was horrid but grand! Then up sprang two other withered creatures from Styx, who poured forth curses upon the two cowardly and retreating villains. I shuddered and awoke, but found naught but darkness reigning supreme, and O how I prayed for—(enter Leo) Leo! O how good of you to come and dispel my fears! How lonely I have been for thee! But even here thou'rt not safe, if that dastardly villain were to perceive thee.

LEO. I care not for him, my virgin. There are mightier powers abroad than he; but all thou hast said is true. Bind these arms, Venetia, and you Margarita, call a constable, and have it announced that Leo, the Duke's would-be assassin, is captured. Leave the rest to me.

MARG. As you say then Leo, only I hope no harm may come from it, adieu. (Exit)

LEO. Come, Venetia, bind these arms, tighter! There that's well. Now you must trust me to reinstate my honor, I can endure this silence no longer. Pray the Duke to grant me an audience and I shall do the rest.

VENETIA. I will trust your wisdom Leo, but what do you intend to do?

LEO. Perchance to challenge my accuser on his honor as a Roman Knight to give me satisfaction and to do or die in doing.

VENETIA. O, No! No! Not that, Leo! What would your poor flower do but wither without thy love. No! No! Not that Leo! I have a better plan. Let me interview my father, the Duke, on thy behalf. I shall plead, O! as I never plead before, and thou shalt aid me.

LEO. My honor must be avenged! But as thou sayest, gain me an interview with the Duke and we'll convince him, if he had a heart of stone.

Enter Constable and Margarita.

VENETIA. Into thy hands, good constable, I commit this charge. Have good care of him, for he is innocent. It being our plot to bring justice upon the heads of the true, nay! rather the false villains. Guard him most leniently and I'll reward thee handsomely. Dost thou understand?

CONSTABLE. Ay! Ay! Gentle lady. He shall have the best of care.

VENETIA. Let him have ample amusement, better accommodation and everything that he requires. Do you understand?

CONSTABLE. Ay! Ay! He shall have all these, m lady.

VENETIA. Be kind to him, won't you constable?

CONSTABLE. Ay! Ay! Come sir, you are my prisoner, march!

LEO. My more than life, vale!

VENETIA. Heaven bless thee, Leo, farewell! (Exit Constable and Leo.)

Now I will straight way to my father, and conyince him that Leo is guiltless. Come coz., lend me your aid.

—: CURTAIN :—

ACT IV—SCENE 8.

The Duke's chamber.—The Leech and attendants present. Doctor, after examination with the Apothecary.

LEECH. My lord, the critical point is passed. Recovery may now be speedily looked for.

VENETIA. The heavens be praised! Why father, the sunbeams play upon thine eyes already!

APOTH. (Sees the bottle in which poison was kept and recognizes in it the one stolen from his pharmacie.) Look ye all! This vial doth hold a tale, which, exposed to your eyes would cause you the gravest of suspicions. A certain nobleman entered my shop a fortnight ago and whilst my back was turned, he did steal this from my shelf, and you all can see the result. I will go and seek him out tho' I know not his name. Verily we will a tale of crime unfold. Come doctor, let's see to this. (exeunt Leech and Apoth.)

VENETIA. Father, I would have a few words with thee.

DUKE. Well, my daughter. What has happened of late?

VENETIA. Naught of much importance, dear father. My liege, I wish to speak to you of Leo, to tell you that he is innocent, that he is free from all guilt that has been so maliciously put upon him, and that your friend and counsellor, Ronolo, is the guilty one, who has done this mis-shapen deed. Know you, father, that Ronolo interviewed me for my hand some time back, and when I told him that Leo had some claim upon my life and hand, he coaxed, then raved, and finally threatened that Leo should never possess me. He has framed such suspicions to suit himself and to ensnare you into his meshes.

DUKE. Ye gods, child, is't thus you address your father? Then tell me why did this young gallant fly? What is that a signal to? Why that letter? No! No! I could not doubt Ronolo.

VENETIA. Father, I mean no disrespect. You have never taught me that, but what I say nevertheless I believe true. Leo, it is true, fled, but he fled at my direction. Forgive me, dear father, but I knew him innocent and bade him fly till we might publish his innocence. He came back at his own direction, bade me bind him, and have him sent to prison. Will you not hear in his own defence, father?

DUKE. (pause) Yes, I would like to have him stand before me. Go, have him sent hither, I will see him.

VENETIA. O thank you father. Thou are always just! (Exit Venetia.)

DUKE. Niece, what thinkest thou of this matter?

MARG. O faith! My thoughts are not your thoughts. Verily, we judge the author by his work, the master mechanic by his inventions, men's natures by their looks. Leo's countenance bears not the stamp of deep intrigue practised here. He is too young, too nobly bred, and wherein would be the gain to him?

DUKE. But you cannot dispute all these facts. The letter, the disappearance of the maid, the vial of poison. Are these not more than marks upon the sea sand.

MARG. They are very elaborately traced and nicely fitted together, but wait for the high tidal wave, and not one vestige will remain, I venture to declare.

DUKE. Do you believe that? Then what object would my friend Ronolo have in all this?

MARG. I know not and yet perchance to gain your daughter in his power. Should you have died, he might have—well, who knows.

DUKE. Ah, I see it all now. Yes and I bade him watch over her with a brother's eye, when I had gone. Foul villain! Thank heavens the catastrophe is averted.

(enter Ronolo)

RONOLO. Peace to you my lord. I hope thou'rt gaining ground, but I see it written on thy looks. Hope is the greatest inspiration of life.

DUKE. Yes, I am better, much thanks to you! Why have I displeased thee so grossly, that thou should'st frown so discordantly at my thanks.

RONOLO. Nay, Nay! My lord, 'twas but a sharp pain through my brain. These evening carousals are not what they seem, when wine becomes a regret.

DUKE. Hold, go not yet. I have sent for my would-be assassin. I expect you to face him in guilt or innocence.

RONOLO. Ay?

DUKE. I intend to pardon or to sentence him.

RONOLO. Yes! Death in my eyes is too good for such as he. The rack or spike is more meritorious. Such beings are dangerous to the community, and to attempt the life of the most noble duke himself, is villainy in the extreme.

DUKE. Yes! But suppose he is innocent.

RONOLO. Innocent! Have I not sworn witnesses that would convict Hercules himself? Innocent! Ye gods! Where is his sweetheart now? Why that letter and his flight the evidence of innocence?

DUKE. Well, Ronolo, for thine honor's sake. I hope it be as you say. (Enter Leo bound, and Venetia.) Come forth and let me stand face to face with guilt, that I may see its countenances. Why thine eye is clear for such a deed. Thou dost not tremble. Know ye that you are standing face to face with death?

LEO. I do, my lord.

DUKE. Well?

LEO. (Turning and facing Ronolo) And I know moreover that I am standing face to face with the most cowardly coward that ever drew the breath of life.

RONOLO. What you braggart! Would you dare insinuate such an insult? (Is about to strike him with sword, Venetia intercepts him.)

VENETIA. Hold, sir! Do you not see that he is bound? I command you to put up your bloody sword and attend to us. (Venetia unbinds Leo.)

LEO. (Drawing his sword, presents it to the Duke and bends before him.) If you think I am blood and water and afraid to die, I challenge thee to strike me (pause) strike!

DUKE. Nay, Nay! For I would not return that which I had taken away. I must hear more. Give me thine evidence.

LEO. Yesternight, when I lay asleep upon the mountain's breast, I dreamed a dream. I awoke but found it naught save a hideous nightmare. I prayed and again slept. I dreamed another dream, that Ronolo, there, stood above me with his sword raised above my head, cowardice held his arm, and I slept on. I dreamed that his accomplice then advanced with his murderous weapon, fear smote his heart and he failed in his evil design. Then forth came Ronolo again, and as his weapon fell upon my heart, there arose so ne awful shape as a vision from hell, and received the thrust. She fell, and in her dying agony, she cursed that man. Note his look now. I awoke in an awful witch light. It was no dream but an awful reality and there stands, need I say it, look for yourselves—the guilty wretch!

RONOLO. You lie! You fiend! Duke 'tis a lie! I'll make him eat it or choke it down his throat.

(enter Apothecary)
 APOTHECARY. Hold sir! I have a word which I think will fit here. Look sir, do you not recognize your theft? (Holding up vial) Most noble Duke, this vile recreant did enter my pharmacie some time ago, and did beguile me to show him my most deadly philters, and when my back was turned, he did steal this potion with criminal intent upon thy person. You all may see the result. His vile accomplice did also steal my bag of moneys, but I care not for that, so long as full justice is done for so great a crime against thy noble self.

RONOLO. Thou liest! Prove it, fool! 'Tis a conspiracy against a Roman Knight.

DUKE. I thank thee, good Apothecary, for thy timely service. Leo! can'st thou prove thy assertions?

LEO. I have both proof in her poor murdered anatomy and his murderous sword which in his terror he had not courage to withdraw from its bloody bed.

DUKE! Have him bound and he shall have full justice dealt him. Pray leave me now for a short space till I have slept. I have done a gross injustice, which shall be righted.

—: CURTAIN —:

ACT V—SCENE 1.

The Amphitheatre. The Duke, Venetia, Margarita, courtiers, guard etc. present. Trumpet sounds.

EDITOR. Know ye, O Romans! That Sannio, surnamed the Blackheart, criminally indicted as an accomplice to the four crimes of Ronolo, will now be placed in battle with Nobilius, the champion wrestler.

DUKE. Bring forth the wrestlers! (Nobilius and Sannio come forth.)

NOBILIUS. Now must the honor of Leo, the brave, be reinstated. Come sir. (They wrestle. In the fight Nobilius' wig comes off, revealing Lucilius. Sannio thrown.)

EDITOR. His neck, I fear, is broke, my lord; yes, it is so.

DUKE. Bear him away. Come hither, Lucilius. Why didst thou place thyself in such a danger? Explain.

LUCILIUS. My lord, spare me the answer. I am the friend of Leo.

DUKE. Answer. Was't not more than friendship that made you venture your neck so?

LUCILIUS. For my love, which is none less than Spartan. I did it; and yet I did it for another reason too, which I hope, my lord, you'll excuse.

DUKE. Name it.

LUCILIUS. 'Twas a conspiracy of friends. My noble Duke, I had rather you had not asked me, but in a love quarrel with thy niece, I was challenged to do the deed. Thus I did it to prove my love to one, my friendship to another; and both are equally worthy of the tribute.

DUKE. Little vixen, you lead your lover on a strange chase, but all's well, that ends well. We'll pardon thee in default of worse punishment. Come hither Lucilius. (Trumpet sounds.)

EDITOR. Know ye, O Roman's, that Ronolo, the Roman general, criminally indicted for attempting the life of our most noble Duke, and who, unlawfully in the attempt to murder one, committed murder upon another, will now be placed with naked sword before Vigores. Fight to the death.

DUKE. Let them be brought forth!

Enter Ronolo, and Leo disguised as Vigores.

VIGORES. Come, where is this black hearted villain? Now must Leo's honor be avenged. Pray quickly, for thy last few moments here upon earth are fast closing like night upon a blood stained day! Duke, grant this quivering Aspen some choice besides death, if he slay me; grant him release. Then you

shall see better sport, for cowardice was never wont to show the front of courage. Come, grant him life if he slay me.

DUKE. In duty to Leo, I cannot.

VIGORES. If Leo consents, wilt thou ?

DUKE. There is not much alternative in that. E'en then death is inevitable.

VIGORES. If Leo consents ?

DUKE. If he consents, I would permit it, subject to ostracism for life from my dominions.

VIGORES. (Pulling off mask revealing Leo himself) Then Leo consents. Come sir ! my honor demands restitution. (They fight)

VENETIA. Jove with him ! (leaves the audience) (Ronolo falls)
(rushing into arena) O Leo ! How cruel of you to engender your life, when you know it is more to me than my hopes of heaven.

LEO. My peerless white lily, my beauty personified, to you my love is paramount to all, save honor and fame, without which my life would be as worthless as a straw upon the sea to a drowning man. I am sorry for your sorrow, but pray you be happy in my happiness. (Enter Duke into Arena.) Most noble Duke, I now reclaim thy promise ! Have I not won her ?

DUKE. You have, my noble son. Here's my hand and where my hand goes, my blessing follows. May she be to thee the same glorious atmosphere of love and tenderness she has proven herself to me (They kneel for his blessing, when Ronolo is his last dying agony, makes a pass at Venetia, which Servantus foreseeing intercepts and falls himself.)

LEO. Oh ! Servantus, dear old man ! Look up and tell me thou'rt not hurt ! Come, look up, Servantus ; can'st thou not feel the warm blood o'er my heart congeal ; can'st thou not feel my heart's great sorrow ? Wake up Servantus ! Come, wake up, my counsellors, friend my brother. What ! no look ! no word ! then thou'rt dead. O Ronolo, thou wert indeed made accomplice to hell itself when the witches curst thy life. My poor, poor friend. (sobs)

DUKE. Come, Venetia, give him thy comfort. There is nothing like a woman's tender sympathy to heal a broken heart.

VENETIA. Leo, weep not, for wherein you have lost a faithful friend, you have gained another. Let me be thy counsellor, thy friend and brother.

LEO. Indeed ! I will, but ah ! Venetia, if you knew how inseparable we have grown thro' long connection. The left hand had not more use for the right than I for Servantus, my old friend and servant.

SERVANTUS. (coming to, beckons Leo)

DUKE. (propping up Servantus) Leo !

LEO. (turning) What, Servantus ; alive !

SERVANTUS. No ! No ! lad. I'm going fast. In the midst of life we are at the gates of death. I'm going — do not mind, dear child. 'Tis only loves sacrifice — only what I — ah, me ! I bleed. Press your hand o'er that gaping wound. (pause) grieve not, my pet, for the time is come when my white hairs are summoned to a brighter land, wherein my old master and your mother await their faithful servant. (a cry of pain) Its coming, lad ! (to Venetia) Come, daughter ! (places her hand in that of Leo's and expires.)

DUKE. Verily, verily, this has been a day of heavy, sorrow. Ronolo, thou poor inanimate form, I pity thee ! Just retribution shall be meted out to thee in the great hereafter. I tremble for thy remorse. Come, Leo, I need thy companionship in my old age. Lend me thy counsel to rule this iniquitous age and live in peace with my daughter. Come, Venetia, comfort him. Hie, there ! bear his dust reverently to the palace for interment. He's worthy of a better bed than the hands of princes may bestow. Come, let's away from such sorrowful scenes.

—: CURTAIN :—